Method acting, or as it is sometimes simply known, the Method, is a technique used by actors. Method acting is thought to have revolutionized acting as we known it today. It is the antithesis of the wooden actor and uses techniques such as sense and memory to achieve realism in acting. Actors who use the Method rely on using their own emotions from their past in order to bring new depth to a part.

Method acting is thought of as an American form of acting, but it was a Russian theatre director named Konstantin Stanislavski who wrote books on the subject in the 1930s. Around the same time, one of Stanislavski’s students, Richard Boleslawsky, opened an [acting school](http://www.wisegeek.com/how-do-i-choose-an-acting-school.htm) in New York. Boleslawsky began teaching Stanislavski’s basic principles of acting.

In the 1940s and 50s, method acting was popularized and taught at the legendary Actors' Studio in New York City by famed acting teacher Lee Strasberg. Another school in New York, called the Actors' Group, also taught the method under the coaching of Stella Adler. Acting students came from far and wide to learn this new technique.

Popularity of the Method grew with the work of actors such as Marlon [Brando](http://www.wisegeek.com/who-is-marlon-brando.htm) and [James Dean](http://www.wisegeek.com/who-is-james-dean.htm). Their style of acting, or non-acting, was considered a breakthrough in the acting world. Compared to old style actors such as [Clark Gable](http://www.wisegeek.com/who-is-clark-gable.htm), theirs was an acting of previously unseen raw emotion and sensitivity. Other famous actors who have studied the Method are Al Pacino, [Paul Newman](http://www.wisegeek.com/who-is-paul-newman.htm) and Robert [DeNiro](http://www.wisegeek.com/who-is-robert-deniro.htm).

Method acting is thought to one of the most difficult techniques to learn; there are no technical forms or lessons that can be practiced to learn it. There are numerous versions of the Method, taught by different teachers. The initial approach was to recall a past experience and immerse oneself in the emotion of that experience so as to apply it to the scene presently being undertaken.

Stella Adler, who taught method acting to both [Marlon Brando](http://www.wisegeek.com/who-is-marlon-brando.htm) and [Robert DeNiro](http://www.wisegeek.com/who-is-robert-deniro.htm), studied method acting with Stanislavski. She took a different approach to method acting. She asked students to use their imagination to get into the mind of the character and adopt the emotions that the character would have. By doing this, actors could harness real emotions in portraying their characters.

Although method acting is thought to be the most realistic of techniques it can sometimes present a minor irritation to other actors. Dustin Hoffman once went without bathing and sleeping for two days in order to immerse himself in a role. On seeing Hoffman’s condition, Laurence Olivier his co-star in the film, famously asked him, "Why don’t you just act?"